



QUESTIONS FOR ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONER NOMINEE

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COMMISSIONER OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ([CGS § 32-1B](#))

The commissioner manages the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), which develops and implements the state's community and economic development policies and programs. The commissioner also oversees state efforts to promote culture and tourism and serves, ex officio, as the chair of the board of the quasi-public Connecticut Innovations, Inc.

- The economic development policies include providing different types of financing and tax incentives to businesses for constructing or expanding facilities, acquiring machinery and equipment, cleaning up and redeveloping polluted properties.
- The community development policies include dispersing federal and state dollars to small towns and nonprofit developers for rehabilitating homes and apartments, improving roads and sidewalks, constructing community facilities, funding regional revolving loan funds, and developing industrial and office parks.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. What do you consider to be your biggest accomplishments since you became commissioner four years ago? What do you want to accomplish in the next four years?
2. At the press conference announcing your nomination in 2011, the governor said that "for far too long, DECD has been too insular and not welcoming enough" to businesses, and stated that you would be "fully empowered to create a new organization with a new approach."

- a. How has DECD changed during your tenure to better serve Connecticut businesses?
- b. What do you plan to do in the next four years to further improve DECD's customer service?

CREATING JOBS

Economists report that Connecticut's economy continues to grow, but at a slower rate than the nation and several nearby states. The New England Economic Partnership (NEEP) estimates Connecticut will gain about 14,000 jobs in 2014 and add about 25,100 more in 2015, up from the 9,400 gained in 2013 but slower than the national recovery. Although this is better news than four years ago when you first became commissioner, it suggests that Connecticut still has room for improvement.

1. Why is the recovery slower in Connecticut? Are public policies contributing to slow growth?
2. Under what conditions do businesses create jobs? Can public policies stimulate those conditions?
3. How has the governor's "First Five" initiative contributed to job growth? What kinds of jobs has it added? Do its costs outweigh its benefits?

ATTRACTING, RETAINING, AND GROWING BUSINESSES

1. What are the things that keep businesses from growing and expanding here? Can public policy address these barriers?
2. Why do businesses move from one place to another? Do taxes and regulations (or lack thereof) drive these decisions?
3. How much of the state's economic development effort is devoted to (1) helping new, startup businesses, (2) retaining established businesses, and (3) attracting businesses from other states and nations?
4. How do you determine the appropriate amount of financial assistance and incentives to give a business relocating to Connecticut from other states? How do you determine if this assistance exceeds the benefits?

GROWING CONNECTICUT'S ECONOMIC BASE INDUSTRIES

1. How will the Connecticut economy change over the next 10 years? What major new industries are on the horizon? What will happen to our current ones? Are we prepared for any economic shocks?

2. Manufacturing is a major industry in Connecticut. Last year, the legislature created the Manufacturing Innovation Fund, which provides funding for expansion and product development, among other things, to businesses and researchers in the supply chains of the aerospace, medical device, and other industries. What is the status of this fund? How does this fund meet the needs of manufacturers? What else can Connecticut do to retain and grow its manufacturing base?
3. Connecticut has recently made major investments in the bioscience industry with projects like Jackson Labs and the Bioscience Innovation Fund. How have these projects helped grow Connecticut's bioscience industry? What else does Connecticut need to support bioscience development?
4. What's the outlook for Connecticut's gaming industry? How does DECD identify and assess forces that could affect this and other key industries?
5. What other industries present opportunities for Connecticut? How can the state develop those industries?

SMALL BUSINESSES

1. What is the difference between the Small Business Express (Express) program and the other state and federal small business loan programs? How well do you think it serves small business' needs? Has Express assistance mostly helped retain business and jobs, or has it helped businesses expand and create jobs?
2. How does the state vet Express applicants? How does this process compare with that of other programs? Are most of the businesses funded by this program still operating?

TAX CREDITS

1. How does DECD evaluate the effectiveness of tax credits and other financial incentives? Is the evaluation rigorous enough? Does DECD use evaluations to improve (or eliminate) programs? Could better evaluation improve programs?
2. Based on your experience, do tax credits and other incentives encourage businesses to do something they would not otherwise do or simply pay them for something they would have done anyway?
3. Should the legislature budget tax credits just as it budgets other expenses?
4. How can DECD help the legislature evaluate credits' effectiveness?

PLANNING

1. There seems to be a lot of planning going on in Connecticut. State agencies, regional planning organizations, local planning commissions, utilities, businesses, and nonprofit organizations plan. Is this a problem? Are all these agencies on the same page? Do they have to be?
2. What are the goals and objectives of the state's five-year strategic economic development plan? Do they address the state's major economic challenges? Does the plan inform or guide DECD's decisions? Is it consistent with the five-year State Plan of Conservation and Development?
3. The lenses we use to analyze the economy predetermine our policies and programs. How should the state analyze the economy? For example, should it analyze our major industries, such as insurance and manufacturing; small businesses; the status of our physical infrastructure; or the innovation process? What tools can help us do so?

PROMOTING INNOVATION

1. Do most businesses use state-of-the-art technologies and techniques? Does the state need to do more to help businesses adopt these technologies and techniques?
2. What is innovation? How does it happen? What gets in its way?
3. We often think of innovation as creating a new product. However, process innovation can substantially impact existing businesses, helping them do what they already do in a more efficient manner. What resources exist to help businesses improve their processes? Can the state do more to help them?

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

1. What is DECD's role in community development as opposed to economic development?
2. The Enterprise Zone program, established in 1981 and significantly expanded since, aims to develop communities by incentivizing businesses, through tax credits, to locate in distressed areas. Do you think this program has worked? Are there barriers, other than taxes, that keep businesses from locating in distressed areas? How else could the state help businesses locate or remain in distressed areas? Do enterprise zone businesses have other needs besides tax relief?

WORKFORCE

3. Does the state do a good job aligning worker training programs with the skills businesses need? Do you think DECD should have a role in this process?
4. Electric Boat recently announced that it will expand its workforce to build the Navy's next generation submarines. Do we have enough skilled workers to fill those jobs? Do we have the programs to train or retrain workers?

EXPORTING

1. Finding foreign markets for goods and services could help businesses weather economic downturns. Are Connecticut's small and medium-size businesses exploiting foreign markets? If not, why? What are the obstacles and what should DECD do to help these businesses overcome them?
2. You recently visited Israel to encourage Israeli companies looking to expand to do so in Connecticut and help Connecticut businesses that wish to export there. What did you learn about Israeli economic development? Are there policies and practices we can apply here?
3. Does President Obama's recent effort to normalize relations with Cuba present trade opportunities for Connecticut? Are we prepared to help businesses exploit these opportunities?

BROWNFIELDS

1. During your tenure, the state has significantly revamped its brownfield remediation programs. Among other things, it has (1) expanded the benefits and eligible entities for the brownfield cleanup program, (2) created expedited review and permitting processes, and (3) provided liability protection to parties investigating and remediating brownfields. What has been the impact of these changes? What can the state do to improve?

CULTURE AND TOURISM

1. How does culture and tourism fit into DECD's mission and daily operations?
2. How well is the state organized to promote the arts, history, culture, and tourism? What is DECD's role in these activities?

BUSINESS FRIENDLY PROGRAMS

Consider the universe of economic development organizations federal, state, and local government public and quasi-public agencies; nonprofit developers and business associations; and private consultants, to name a few.

1. How does this constellation of agencies look to businesses? What changes have you made to help them to identify and access the services they need?
2. What is DECD's role vis-à-vis these organizations? What should that role be?
3. During your tenure, the legislature consolidated Connecticut Innovations, Inc. and the Connecticut Development Authority and made you chair of CII's board. How has the consolidation impacted service delivery? How does your role as board chair impact collaboration between DECD and CII when it comes to delivering economic development assistance?
4. Other agencies besides DECD affect whether people and businesses prosper in Connecticut. How does DECD coordinate its plans and actions with the transportation, environmental protection, labor, and higher education departments, to name a few?

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